



Localising the MDGs: Local Development, Global Impact

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Nairobi, Kenya

Report

"It is important to realize that even though the MDGs are global, they can most effectively be achieved through action at the local level. It is at the local level that inequalities between people in a city can be addressed. It is at the local level that safe drinking water, electricity and other services including health and education are provided, that garbage is collected and that food is sold at markets. In each city and town, there will be a local reality to be taken into consideration, and indeed the MDGs should be adapted to meet this reality. This is also the only way to make the most of local social capital and get the community involved. Of course, national level plans and actions are critical. But experience has shown that national plans must be linked with both local realities and the people they serve to be successful."

From the welcome address by Dr. Oyeyinka Oyebanji (Director of the Monitoring and Research Division of UN-HABITAT)

1. Introduction

On April 18 and 19, UNDP and SNV - in partnership with UN-HABITAT and UNCDF - hosted the learning event "Localising the MDGs: Local Development, Global Impact".

The event was based on the assumption that the MDGs will not be achieved unless they are brought to the local level, a process which implies designing, implementing and monitoring local development strategies to achieve the MDGs or, more specifically, to achieve locally adapted MDG targets.

During two days of intense discussions and debate, participants shared experiences and reviewed and discussed (case) evidence of the value-added of MDG localisation efforts, especially in the areas of participatory planning and budgeting, implementation and scaling-up and monitoring and review. They also identified and agreed on priority needs in supporting the implementation and scaling-up of localisation initiatives.

The event was attended by over 80 participants, including local and national government officials, civil society representatives and members of the international development community. For SNV, UNDP, UNHABITAT and UNCDF, participants included (regional) directors, regional and country-level advisors and Head Office staff, who are directly involved in efforts to support the localisation of the MDGs.

This report is an attempt to distil the key messages from the different sessions. Being a summary, it does not capture all the richness and details of the discussion. We invite you to visit the event website (www.undp.org/capacity) for a detailed agenda of the event and for presentations and contributions by participants. A list of participants is also available.



DAY 1: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

The first day of the event (April 18) focused on sharing experiences and drawing lessons learned from practical experiences. After a roundtable discussion in plenary – with panellists from UNDP, SNV, UN-HABITAT and UNCDF – participants were divided into three working groups where they listened to presentations and engaged in discussions.

Roundtable: Linking MDG Localisation, Decentralisation and Local Governance

Four panellists (from SNV, UNDP, UNCDF and UN-HABITAT) were challenged to discuss the value-added of MDG localisation, the approach of their organisation, and the challenges to be confronted.

Key points that emerged are:

- From a thematic point of view, the MDGs and MDG localisation bring nothing new. But they do bring a comprehensive, time-bound and focused framework for action and an ambitious agenda for accelerating achievements and measuring progress.
- The MDGs have the power to induce a natural relation between the national and the local level, but in practice, this is often not the case. The degree of decentralisation reform and the balance of power between central and local levels are a key determinant of this relationship. Monitoring and information systems to measure progress can help bring the levels closer together.
- Investments in the absence of capacities will not bring the desired results, yet there can be no capacity development without investments. This catch-22 needs to be addressed.
- There is too much focus on planning and monitoring and not enough attention for implementation.
- Scaling-up of activities is another key challenge to be addressed. This calls for good strategies, effective leadership and sufficient investment resources.
- The area-based approach to development can be useful when discussing the scaling-up of basic services but less so when addressing production and market access.

Working group 1: Participatory Planning and Budgeting for MDG Localisation

Working group 1 focused on the question of planning and budgeting and included presentations on:

1. Civic Participation in Monitoring MDGs and NSSED (National Strategy of Social Economic Development) 2005-2007 in Albania
2. The case of Tanzania's Local Government Authorities
3. The MDG Operationalisation Project in Nepal
4. The case of the Urban Municipality of Tahoua (Niger)
5. The case of Guiguiné in Senegal

The following key observations emerged:

- The past decade was the decade of planning and advocacy. We should aim to make the current decade a decade for implementation.
- Participatory planning processes should be managed in such a way that they result in realistic and relevant plans and lessen the risk of creating expectations that cannot be met. Plans need to be based on accurate information, good facilitation (not 'facilitation' or elite capture), and solid baseline data.
- There is often a disconnect between top-down and bottom-up planning (the "messy middle")
- The importance of planning and budgeting for sustainable livelihoods and local economic development should not be overlooked. There is a need for increased economic opportunities so that people will be able to fend for themselves and will be less dependent on outside sources of funding.
- Engagement and participation need to be improved further. Access to information by members of a community about their community (relative to others) can trigger self-mobilisation and community action.
- The added-value of civil society engagement is noticeable in terms of ensuring relevance, targeting and scaling-up of plans.
- MDG localisation can be pursued through a combination of local government planning approaches (area-based), sector programmes (e.g. health) and quick-win projects.

Working group 2: Implementation and Scaling-up for MDG Localisation

Working group 2 looked at the implementation and scaling-up of localisation initiatives with presentations on:

1. The Decentralisation and Local Development Support Programme in Yemen
2. The Millennium Villages Project
3. The Special Citation on Local Capacity Innovations for the MDGs by the Galing Pook Foundation (The Philippines)

From the discussion, a number of key success factors for the implementation of MDG localisation can be distilled:

- Buy-in from the population/communities (through participatory planning)
- A sound legal basis (through decentralisation reform)
- An accurate analysis of what already exists
- A functioning system of service delivery by local governments/at the local level
- Partnerships across different levels and stakeholders as well as an administrative level where local and national planning meet (e.g. the district or governorate level)

Success factors for the scaling-up of initiatives include:

- The implementation phase must have been successful
- The necessary (financial) resources need to be available (whether from local, national or external sources)
- The impact of activities has been monitored during the initial implementation phase
- Advocacy efforts have been made so that there is broad support for the replication, broadening or deepening of existing initiatives, necessary policy changes and the development of national programmes where appropriate.
- There is a functioning and effective local government system
- There is political will and buy-in to up-scale certain initiatives

Working group 3: Monitoring and Review of MDG Localisation

Group 3 addressed the question of monitoring and review of MDG localisation efforts with presentations on:

1. Monitoring the MDGs in the Lake Victoria Region: Water and Sanitation Initiative
2. The experience of monitoring the MDGs in Rwanda using the UNCDF Management Information System
3. The case of Nakuru municipality from Kenya

The group discussed a range of questions, including:

- How to ensure that monitoring and review are used to inform decision-making?
- What capacities are needed and how are they developed (e.g. statistical literacy)?
- What is the optimal amount of data to be collected?
- Who gives the monitoring system (and its outcome) legitimacy?
- How to disaggregate national data to the local level?

They also identified what is needed for effective monitoring:

- Accurate quality data (baseline data) that reflects the reality on the ground
- Legitimate monitoring instruments that have political and legal support
- Harmonization of tools (qualitative vs. quantitative, simple vs. sophisticated)
- Coherence in international and local indicators and in approach
- Linkages between the national and the local monitoring system
- Local sources of finance to avoid dependence on external funding
- Involvement of local communities through consultations

DAY 2: THE WAY FORWARD

On day two (April 19), participants returned to plenary for a World Café style discussion on the scaling-up of MDG localisation efforts, with a focus on the types of initiatives that are worth scaling-up, the bottlenecks and requirements involved, and the role that different people and organisations can and should play. This last point was discussed in more detail in a next session, in which participants were challenged to make concrete suggestions and commitments to moving the localisation agenda forward. After a wrap up by SNV and UNDP, Dr Edward Sambili, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Planning and National Development, Republic of Kenya, delivered a closing address on behalf of the Minister, Hon. Henry Obwocha.

From the different discussions and remarks, a number of lessons can be distilled:

- **Types of initiatives that are worth scaling-up/replicating:** integrated planning processes with broad stakeholder participation, pilot projects and community initiatives that offer quick results and impact, and projects and programmes supportive of national strategies for decentralization and local development.
- **Advocacy and awareness-raising:**

- National and local government authorities need to understand what the MDGs are and how and why they should be localized. They should, in turn, be able to explain this in clear and simple terms to their constituencies with an emphasis on the benefits that the MDGs can bring at the local level. Civil society organizations can play an important role in this process.
 - Demonstrating results, for example through pilot projects that have shown impact, the rigorous documentation of successes and lessons learned, and exchange visits to expose local authorities to the experiences of others, are important mechanisms in this respect.
- **Coordination and coherence**
- Greater coordination and coherence is needed if the MDGs are to be achieved. This involves several levels: at the national level across sectors; between the national, regional and local levels; between the government, civil society and the private sector; between national governments and donors; and within the development community.
 - To promote coherence, the mandates of different players need to be clear and well-understood by all. The mandates of national versus local government authorities need to be well-established, including resource flows and accountability mechanisms.
 - Regarding the donor/development community, at country level, donor coordination meetings (in line also with the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness) and partnerships between organizations with a similar mandate, can promote greater effectiveness and coherence of policy and programmes.
 - A common monitoring system (such as DevInfo, which is readily available and free) can help monitor progress, adjust plans, set priorities, and monitor direct budget support.
- **Financial resources**
- Access to financial resources is a major concern as many countries rely heavily on ODA funds, which are not increasing as expected. Also, despite public sector reforms, funds do not always trickle down from the national to the local level.
 - Different partners can play a role in securing the necessary resources:
 - National and local governments need to agree on intra-governmental fiscal transfers that will allow local governments to carry out their mandate.
 - Local governments should establish systems for public expenditure tracking which will help improve accountability and transparency and will encourage the participation of households through the payment of taxes.
 - Bilateral and multi-lateral donors are increasingly providing ODA through direct budget support. They need to establish mechanisms to ensure that funds are adequately channelled to the local level, that they are aligned to national priorities and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, and that they are clearly oriented towards supporting social and economic development at the sub-national level.
 - The private sector, either directly or through partnerships with governments, can support quick-win initiatives, such as the provision of bed-nets or generic medicine.
- **Capacity Development**
- Capacity development will continue to be a priority for donors and governments. There is a need for detailed needs assessments, inclusive of capacities, and specific costing of the MDGs. This will help guide the investment of resources and will help the government and its partners to set their priorities.
 - Key capacities are those to plan, budget, implement and monitor local development plans, to manage multi-stakeholder engagement processes, and to build partnerships that build on principles of equality in which all partners hold each other accountable.